



April 04, 2017
Support for SJM 7

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SJM 7, a memorial to the US President and Congress to maintain funding support for our US Coast Guard Air operations in Newport, Oregon. Surfrider Foundation is strongly opposed to reduced federal funding that would remove these critical life-saving resources from our coast. On behalf of our Newport, Siuslaw, Coos Bay and Portland Chapters, as well as our organizing committees in Clatsop and Curry Counties, we urge your yes vote on this memorial to Congress for continued funding of the Coast Guard helicopter operations in Newport.

Surfrider Foundation chapters are local, non-profit charters, dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our oceans, waves and beaches. We are watermen and waterwomen and as such spend significant amounts of recreational time both in and on the water. As an organization, we feel that this closure will put many ocean recreational users, visitors and beach goers at a greater risk along the central coast. While we stand by our local ports and fishing community in opposition to removal or re-location of the helicopter operations, we feel that the ocean recreational community, beach-goers and visitors to the central Oregon coast have not been appropriately factored into the Coast Guard's analysis.

Surfrider Foundation participated in the stakeholder meetings in the fall of 2015 where the Coast Guard provided an overview and partial analysis for decisions to relocate air operations from Newport to North Bend. Surfrider finds two fundamental flaws in this analysis:

- 1) A downward trend in USCG search and rescue operations was detailed on a national and west coast-wide scale that we do not believe translates locally and more importantly is not reflective of high priority rescues of the shoreside and non-boater recreational users. If we were to remove at-sea boater rescues and analyze this statistic for shoreside recreational rescues, we believe that trend is actually going up, creating a greater demand for these resources on the central coast. In fact, we conducted a mapping analysis of these rescues, which indeed demonstrates this trend with shoreside rescues to recreational users (see savethehelo.org, maps).
- 2) The nature of non-boater and shoreside recreational rescues are such that they do not align with risk analysis associated with cold water exposure and hypothermia. A good time at the beach turns deadly in a matter of minutes not an hour, and certainly not two as the analysis provides in its reasonable response time. These recreational shoreside individuals are not equipped with radios, immersion suits and likely have no coldwater survival training.

In summary, Surfrider Foundation is deeply concerned with the risk analysis and assessment of non-boater recreational ocean and beach users and feels that this has

been completely left out of this decision making process. We stand by our local ports and fishing community in their concerns for the closing of the Newport air operations, as it puts those lives in danger. As the general trend of search and rescue increases for non-boater recreational users, loss of these resources would not only put these users at a greater risk in the area of highest concentration of use on the Oregon Coast, but it would also put the lives of other local emergency responders at risk that depend on helicopter operations support.

Thank you for your efforts through a yes vote on SJM 7 to send a message to Congress and the President for continued funding of these critical, life-saving resources for our coastal communities.

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